

PLANTS OF THE FARMING AND RANCHING AREAS OF THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

This book, by Arch C. Budd, who has contributed so generously to our Botany section each issue, is on the press at the present time and will be ready for distribution shortly. Besides the flowering plants, Ferns and Fern Allies and Gymnosperms have been included. The book is well illustrated by many of Mr. Budd's drawings, as well as over fifty photographs taken by him.

Not before has so extensive a study been published about Western wild flowers. Judging from a preview of the original manuscript, we have no hesitancy in recommending this book to all who are interested in knowing more about our flora.

INDIAN PIPES

On Saturday, May 13, William MacNeil, Forester at Meadow Lake, noted several clusters of Indian Pipes (*Monotropa Uniflora*) on Section 1, Township 54, Range 17, West of 3rd. The clusters were last year's growth and were growing under a dense stand of fifty-year old Jackpine.

Will other members be on the look-out for this interesting plant and report any finds.

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NATIONAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION DIGEST

This is a new Nature magazine, published at 127 Ruby Street, Winnipeg. Volume I, No. 1, was printed in January. It is published monthly. The Digest contains Nature articles, and discusses conservation problems covering the North American continent. In it, the reader will find articles of lasting interest for the Nature lover and the sportsman.

We have received the first three numbers, and are very pleased with them. Here is a Canadian publication, worthy of the support of every naturalist. The subscription rate is \$3.00 a year.

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THE HARBINGER OF SPRING HAS HISTORIC PAST

By Cliff Shaw, Yorkton

(Published April 20, in the Western Producer)

"Before the end of April the warm sunshine will have unrolled a carpet of lavender crocuses across the prairies and in every rural school, boys and girls will vie with each other to be first in bringing a blossom to the teacher's desk.

Perhaps no flower on the prairies is more welcome than the first crocus. And although they are in no way related to the true crocus it is doubtful if they will ever be widely known on the prairies by any other name.

If you have tried to transplant the prairie crocuses you will have noticed that they grow from a sturdy taproot rather than from a bulb as does the true crocus. Instead they belong to a large plant family which

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THE HARBINGER OF SPRING HAS HISTORIC PAST (Cont'd)

includes many of our most beautiful wild flowers, as well as some of the showy garden flowers such as the delphinium, peony and columbine.

Coming into blossom about the time of Easter, it is sometimes called the "Pasque" flower, but it is listed by the botanists as a "Crocus Anemone." According to Greek tradition Anemos was the god of wind and he is said to have used the flowers as his messengers to herald the coming of spring. The Romans are also reported to have picked the first Anemone of the year to guard them against fever.

The Pasque flower of Great Britain, which closely resembles our prairie crocus, likewise loves the open spaces and in Great Britain is to be found on the grassy slopes of the bare chalk downs. It is not a common flower and reports are that it does not grow in Scotland, Ireland or Wales. It is often called "Danes Blood" and according to tradition only grows where the blood of the Danes was shed in battle with the Saxons.

The plants have an irritating juice and because of this the European peasants in bygone days would run past the blossoms in the belief that the air was tainted. The rootstocks of the European species are said to be poisonous and at one time they were used by the people in the northern districts as a sure remedy for snake bites.

A U.S.A. agricultural bulletin states that the large amount of hairs on the fur-covered sepals of the young plants have been reported injurious to sheep which fed upon the plants.

The true crocus, which is known as "Crocus sativus," is an autumn crocus native to the shores of the Mediterranean. For centuries past this lovely flower has rightly earned the name of "vegetable gold," being the source of saffron, a highly prized yellow dye.

Even today the three yellow stigmas are picked by hand to obtain the saffron powder, one pound of which requires five pounds of stigmas. In early times it was also used in medicine, perfumes and seasoning and at the time of Nero's triumphant entry the streets of Rome were said to have been spread deep with the fragrant powder.

When the eager little students place their offerings of crocuses on teacher's desk this spring, they will indeed be giving a gift with an ancient and historic past behind it.